

Good evening committee members,

My name is Matthew Lin, I am a junior undergraduate student from East Lyme, CT and I am majoring in Biological Sciences on the pre-medical track. I want to take a moment to thank you all for supporting our initiatives in the past, and for specifically holding this appropriations hearing and giving us the chance to be heard. We genuinely appreciate your dedication to serving Connecticut.

Four years ago, when I was searching for the right college to attend, I had on my mind three things: 1) It must provide a top quality science education 2) It must be affordable 3) It must challenge me to become a better citizen and leader, and give me opportunities to do so. Since my acceptance into UConn and my designation as a Nutmeg STEM Scholar, UConn has met all of these needs and has impressed me with the new programs and high caliber students that continue to pour onto campus. In my short three years as an undergraduate, I have been able to join several research labs in the School of Pharmacy and the Physiology and Neurobiology department to pursue projects in finding therapeutics and novel targets for cancer, to take part in HuskyTHON, the 18-hour dance marathon that fundraises for CCMC, to take leadership roles in student organizations focused on humanitarianism, community outreach to disadvantaged high school students, personal development, and serving local communities. I have had the pleasure of working closely with Honors program advisors to create communities for our amazing scholars. And, of course, have seen numerous sporting events that comprise our collective Husky Nation spirit. These opportunities are

all direct results of large funding appropriations such as the Next GENERATION Connecticut initiative and other state funding, without which our growing university would not be able to support.

Growing up in CT, I always saw UConn as the basketball capital of the world. But as I entered high school, I came to realize how powerful an education at this flagship university is, given its rising among the academic, research, and athletic ranks. Now, especially given rising costs in higher education, in-state tuition and a quality education has made UConn that much more attractive. I think we can all agree that this problem of increasing student debt is painfully real, exceedingly apparent, and heavily weighing upon students and their families. In the past few years, the cost of attendance has increased and adds extra burden to an already crushing mountain of debt. Coupling this problem with decreased state funding that leads to program cuts makes it clear that this is not a winning model for the future of our university.

Part and parcel to a wholesome college education is what happens outside of the classroom. Extracurricular enrichment that helps our students improve their soft skills, to help them find passionate hobbies and engage in things they otherwise would not have, that prepare our graduates for a twenty-first century world, are arguably more important now than ever before. No longer, can a student simply go to class, take exams, graduate, and expect to be hired. What UConn needs to continue to do is improve in all aspects of education - both in the lecture hall and beyond, to take our graduates to that extra level that prepares them adequately for this new employment field, to allow them

to shine among their peers. With the threat of serious budget cuts, pressure upon the administration, faculty, and staff to do this is nearly impossible without raising student tuition and related costs of attendance. But this, as I've said before, is a vicious cycle that inevitably leads to more crushing student debt or decreased attendance for those students who cannot afford to attend.

What I would like to see in our university in the next decade is to keep the momentum that has built up even just in the past three years that I've been on campus. I would like to see affordable, quality education become accessible to the best and brightest students, regardless of their abilities to front a large bill. I want every budding scientist to reap the benefit of cutting-edge facilities and engaged faculty that will train a new wave of scientists, to innovate across disciplines, and to be inspired by their peers to reach higher. I would like to see our state put an emphasis on this outstanding research university to help it shape future leaders, businesswomen, politicians, governors, lawyers, architects, performers, accountants, physicians, nurses, and professors. I hope that we can agree that this is the direction we want to take our students towards, and I hope that you take this into consideration when reviewing our annual budget.